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**AREA WOMAN INDICTED FOR COLLECTING \$29,000 IN SOCIAL SECURITY
BENEFITS WHILE CONCEALING BROTHER'S DEATH FOR FOUR YEARS**

CHICAGO -- A former Cicero woman was indicted today on federal fraud charges for allegedly collecting more than \$29,000 in Social Security disability payments to her brother for four years after he died, while she allegedly concealed his death and kept his body in the home they shared until May of this year. The defendant, **Lorraine E. Biase**, was charged with four counts of mail fraud in an indictment returned today by a federal grand jury, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

Biase 58, currently living in Bookfield and formerly of 1315 South 49th Court, Cicero, will be arraigned at a later date in U.S. District Court.

According to the indictment, in March 1987, the Social Security Administration appointed Biase as the representative payee for disability benefit payments for her brother, James M. Parra. Biase was required to notify SSA of any event that would affect her brother's right to receive benefits, including his death. In March 1988, James M. Parra died at age 67. Between April 1998 and May 2002, by concealing her brother's death, Biase allegedly caused SSA to continue sending her brother's monthly benefit checks to her, knowing that she was not entitled to receive the money, which was approximately \$600 per month. As a result of the alleged fraud, SSA lost approximately \$29,195, the indictment alleges.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges with William Cotter, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Social Security Administration's Office of Inspector General Chicago in Chicago. The Cicero

Police Department assisted in the investigation. The government is being represented by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Rick Young, who is handling the case as part of a partnership with the Social Security Administration's Office of General Counsel.

If convicted, each count of mail fraud carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Restitution is mandatory. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the United States has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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